Few early colonists in America were seamen. Most were farmers or artisans that were put ashore by mariners from England who sailed back to Europe for more colonists. But, over time, carpenters and various smiths, indentured men and women who promised to work for years to repay their ocean passage, turned their talents to making things that hopefully would float, and give them some mobility.

Along the American coast crops suffered from a short growing season and New Englanders, fed-up with their starvation farming turned slowly to the harvests of the sea. Ship carpentry as a trade developed to meet their needs.

When Queen Anne's War with France and Spain ended in 1713 and Britain annexed Acadia, later named Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Hudson Bay, New Englanders rushed to the sea. They built hundreds of mackerel, halibut and cod-fishing schooners manned by tough fishermen. Their cod fishery stimulated the growth of local shipyards and later a growing export trade. It also developed the immense whaling industry. In 1700 the Governor of New York said, "There are more good vessels belonging to the town of Boston than to all of Scotland and Ireland."

Shipbuilding in the colonies was the likeliest industry for communities which had an abundance of raw materials that could be floated cheaply downstream from nearby forests. A shipyard was no more than a bare acre of riverbank. Simple tools like the axe, saw, auger and especially the adz allowed carpenters to make most wooden surfaces fit snugly together.

At first, two-masted fishing boats then three evolved into the schooner. It was popular because a large amount of canvas could be handled by a small crew. On the eve of the American Revolution, the third largest port of the British Empire, ranking only below London and Bristol was Boston. Sadly however, most New England ports, especially those in Rhode Island contributed greatly to the slave trade. Brown University in Providence was originally founded by Nicholas Brown and Company on profits from the slave trade.

Yankee schooners went from New England to China for tea, silks and chinaware. They went to the East Indies for coffee and sugar. Far Eastern goods were re-shipped to Europe along with American flour, tobacco and rice. The schooners returned to America from Holland with gin and linseed oil for making paint and inks.

Wine, brandy and fruit came from the Mediterranean; and hemp, iron and other goods from St. Petersburg. American schooners went to the Falklands off the coast of Argentina in the South Atlantic and acquired sealskins and walrus oil. In 1786 a cargo of such skins was brought back to New York on the vessel "United States". Few sold for fifty cents apiece. They were then transferred to the "Eleanora" and sent to India. There at the Port of Calcutta they brought two dollars apiece from a merchant who sent them on to Canton, China where they sold for five dollars, ten-times their New York price. So began the rich China trade of the last decade of the eighteenth century.

In the early 1800's, by some accounts 1843, the "Clipper Ships" were launched. They not only became the fastest ships afloat, they were the most beautiful and showed America's love for speed and grace and its' preferance for the new and daring over the old and established ways of seafaring. The clippers were long, thin waisted craft that towered over everything else in any port. On the bustling waterfronts of America, Europe or the East, they could be spotted by even the greenest landlubber.

The name 'clipper' itself does not define the lines of a vessel. A clipper in the nineteenth century was simply anything that went at a fast clip: a ship, a horse, or a carriage. There were the "Baltimore Clippers", the "China Clippers" and "California Clippers." One clipper, the "Oriental" made the run between New York and Hong Kong in eighty-one days; the famous "Flying Cloud" never did better than ninety-four.

When gold was discovered by James W. Marshall at his sawmill near Coloma, California in 1848, everyone on the east coast wanted to get to San Francisco-in the fastest possible way. Soldiers deserted their posts, crews abandoned their ships, farmers left their crops unharvested, merchants closed their stores and city officials vanished. Some went overland by wagon train. Others took ships to Panama and struggled across the isthmus to re-embark on the Pacific coast. But the favorite way, though not always the fastest, was by clipper, more than 16,000 miles around Cape Horn in South America. The miners in California and those on their way needed everything- heavy equipment, wagons, food and household goods. With eggs selling for $1 apiece and whiskey at $40 a quart, the rewards for delivering goods in a hurry were fantastic.

But how long the boom would last, no one knew. Many of the smaller ships to San Francisco never made a return voyage. Many had been abandoned by their officers and crews who went to the gold fields. Some ships were converted into waterfront stores, hotels and saloons. When the gold rush boom petered out and a commercial depression occured in 1857, the end of the clipper ships was near. A few years later it was the Civil War that ravaged the merchant fleet. After another post-war depression, American investors turned their backs to the sea and put their wealth into the railroads. On the high seas steam replaced sail and nothing would ever be the same again.

* * * * *

Charles John Tranchell was born in the seaport city of Goteborg, Sweden in 1816. As a little boy listening to his father's stories about whales and huge walruses and seals, little Charlie longed for the day that he too would go to sea as a mariner, even though he knew that going to sea was a hazardous and risky business in which many men lost their ships and lives.

The year now was 1829 and his father, Jonas, finally relented, allowing Charlie at the age of thirteen to go sea with his uncle. He soon became attached to the water and, of his own desire, became bound to George Wing, Captain of a merchant vessel for four years beginning September 30, 1834.

George Wing came from a long line of Massachusetts shipping merchants. His grandfather, Josiah Wing Sr. had built quite a reputation as a fine sea captain and a lucky one. He had three sons, George, John and Josiah Jr. Returning home from a sea voyage, John died at the age of twenty at the Boston quarantine station, in 1822. George and Josiah went on to brilliant careers at sea. The son Josiah began to gradually leave the shipping business and go into farming near Fairport, New York to be near his ailing wife, Phoebe. Like Josiah, Phoebe was the daughter of a sea captain and was thus familiar with the dangers inherent to life at sea. In 1837 Phoebe died during the summer.

Charlie Tranchell was now eighteen years old. His indenture papers provided that...he shall faithfully serve his master Captain Wing and shall not marry in the time of his service.

He was to receive food, shelter, clothing and instructions in the 'art of sailing'. Captain George Wing retired early from his mariners life and took young Charlie Tranchell with him and settled on a farm in East Rochester, New York, a few miles from Fairport. Charlie never went back to sea, and began farming. While working for Captain Wing he met Magdalena Stagner, a domestic in the family of Josiah Wing, the brother of Catpain George Wing.

Magdalena was born in Fishbaugh, Belgium in 1811. At the age of twenty she came with an aunt and two cousins to America. The year was 1831. The group landed at the Port of Baltimore where Magdalena became separated from her relatives. She went to the home as a domestic of the captain of the vessel at Cape Cod, Massachussets. She remained working there for two years, and became proficient in the English language. From Cape Cod she moved to New York where she lived on a farm until she met Charlie Tranchell on the Josiah Wing farm at Fairport. They fell in love and both joined the Methodist Church and were married December 5, 1838. He was twenty-two, she was twenty-seven.

They settled in the town of Porter, Niagra County, New York and began a fruit farm. In 1865 at the end of the Civil War they sold the orchard and moved to Michigan, settling on a farm in Bingham Township. To Charlie and Magdalena were born six children. Sadly, two sons and a daughter died early in life. Their surviving son was George C. Tranchell. He was born July 30, 1844 in Niagra County, New York.

In 1861 at the age of seventeen, he enlisted in the Civil War, and served three years and eight months in Company M, 1st N.Y.Regiment, Light Artillery. His regiment was represented in ninety-eight battles, sieges, combats, actions or skirmishes. Batteries of the First were present in all the chief engagements including: Antietam, Appomatox, Bull Run, Chancellorsville, Cold Harbor, Fredricksburg, Gettysburg and Petersburg. George received his discharge in July, 1865.

While in Company M he met Reuben L. Crawford. Together the two returned home on leave where George met Reuben's sister, Elizabeth, daughter of Daniel and Elinor Roach Crawford. They were married April 6, 1864 in Cambria, New York. Elizabeth was born in Canada about 1842.

In 1865, soon after his discharge from the army, George and Elizabeth moved to Michigan where their first son, Ernest was born. Soon afterwards they moved back to New York, where their second son, John Jacob (Jake) and a daughter, Maud were born. Elizabeth died at the age of only thirty-eight in East Rochester, New York on March 22, 1880. George and the children moved back to Michigan, where George married secondly, Caroline H. Rowe, of Ovid, Clinton County, Michigan on November 19, 1881.

John Jacob (Jake) Tranchell was born November 25, 1867 in Wilson Township, Niagra County, New York. He married Kitty Belle (later called Katherine) Jones, September 6, 1889 in Durand, Michigan. Kitty Belle Jones was born November 9, 1872 in Durand. She was the daughter of Charles Philip Jones and Mary Elizabeth Barker Jones. Jake and Kitty Belle had seven children. Four were born in Durand, Michigan : Hugh, Royce, Clarence and Rondo. The growing Tranchell family then moved to Portland, Oregon where Kenneth, Katherine and John Jacob (Jake Jr.) were born.

Katherine Elizabeth Tranchell was born in August, 1909 in Portland, Oregon. In 1929 she married George Hurlburt. Their children were: Beverly Jeanne born February, 1930 in Portland.
Marie Trinette born October, 1931 " "
George Roy born September 1939 in San Fran.
Beverly Jeanne Hurlburt married firstly, Rene Maurice, George A. Litchfield, secondly and Richard Tackabury, thirdly.

Beverly Jeanne and George A. Litchfield had three sons:
Bruce Warren born July, 1954 in Salina, Kansas.
Keith Allen born February, 1956 in Portland, Oregon.
Gregory Dean born July, 1957 in Portland, Oregon.

George A. Litchfield was born in April, 1929. He died in May, 1982. He is interred in the Willamette National Cemetery. He was a Staff Sgt. in the U.S. Air Force.

Bruce Warren Litchfield married Debra Kay, daughter of Larmon Dale and Grace Pearl Dillard Dale. They were married in June, 1974. They were later divorced.

Their daughter, Angie Christine, born September, 1976 in Portland, Oregon married Michael S. Bachara. They were married September 2, 2005 in Milwaukie, Oregon.